



Gurnet Light

Gurnet Lighthouse Will Be Relocated This Fall

The U.S. Coast Guard has announced plans to relocate historic Gurnet Light this fall.

In early July, engineers chose a Hingham contractor to move the lighthouse 150 feet inland because it is perched dangerously close to the edge of an eroding bluff.

Work is expected to begin sometime after Labor Day. The project was delayed when residents complained that the relocated beacon would be too close to their homes. They also said the large trucks and equipment needed would destroy the dirt roads leading to the lighthouse

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along the fragile peninsula.

Gurnet Light, established in 1768, was the first American beacon to have a system of 2 different "twin lights". It was completely destroyed by fire in 1801. A temporary single light was used until the twin towers were completed in 1803. They were later rebuilt in 1843. Although the northeast tower was discontinued in 1924, the remaining tower is still used as a navigational aid flashing a white light.

Wind and rain have eroded the 45-foot high cliff to the point so that the lighthouse is 50 feet from the edge.

If the lighthouse is not moved, Coast Guard engineers say a hurricane or a strong northeast storm could topple it into the ocean.

After a meeting with the Gurnet homeowners in September, Coast Guard officials agreed to postpone the move and agreed to another location. They also agreed to address concerns about the road damage.

The original plan would have moved the lighthouse about 200 feet to a spot in front of the entrance to Fort Andrew, an earthen garrison used by colonial troops during the Revolutionary War. The current plan would keep the lighthouse within the walls of the fort and farther from neighboring houses.

The heavy truck traffic which would be required along the road remains a concern and Coast Guard officials are looking into the possibility of using a helicopter to transport equipment.

Because access is from Duxbury and the Gurnet is located in Plymouth, the move must also be approved by the conservation commissions and state historical commission.

Gurnet Light is made entirely of wood and is relatively small in size.

Gurnet Light will be the third lighthouse in Massachusetts to be moved in the last 2 years. In the summer of 1996, Highland Light in North Truro was moved 450 feet from the edge of a cliff because of erosion. Later that year Nauset Light in Eastham was moved 300 feet inland.

The Gurnet Project will cost about \$184,000. It cost \$1.7 million to move Highland Light.